

Gender and Racial Justice in SNAP

Background

The Food Research & Action Center (FRAC) collaborated with the National Women's Law Center (NWLC) to produce a research brief, titled *Gender and Racial Justice in SNAP*, which examines the ways in which adequate Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits meet the needs of beneficiaries and help reduce poverty and food insecurity.

The brief specifically looks at the impact of SNAP benefits on women, including women of color, disabled women, older women, immigrant women, as well as LGBTQIA+ individuals. The brief includes evidence on the importance of SNAP for these groups, barriers that make it harder for these groups to access SNAP, and solutions for policymakers to help them improve SNAP.

Issue

SNAP is integral to the economic security and well-being of women and families with low incomes and their children — especially those facing multiple forms of discrimination. However, inadequate benefits and program inefficiencies create barriers that prevent the most marginalized members of our society from receiving the support they need.

Findings

Women, people of color, people with disabilities, and LGBTQIA+ people, have higher SNAP participation rates.

- In 2022, women made up more than half of non-elderly adult SNAP recipients and about one in three non-elderly adult SNAP recipients was a woman of color.
- Additionally, more than half of SNAP households with children were headed by a single adult.

SNAP improves health and education outcomes while also boosting the economy.

- SNAP is associated with improved long-term health and reduced health care costs, which helps strengthen the economy.
- SNAP can positively affect performance for students in critical early years of development as well as college students.

Barriers

Some SNAP rules make it harder for women and families with low incomes to put food on the table.

- Bureaucratic processes and rules, such as arbitrary limits on gross income, work reporting requirements, and a complicated and inefficient application process, exclude some of the people who need SNAP the most from the program.

Some women and LGBTQIA+ people face specific barriers to accessing SNAP.

- General barriers include stigma, difficulty producing and completing required documents, and access to – or ability to perform – jobs that meet work requirements.

Solutions

Ease requirements:

- Remove burdensome requirements, such as gross income thresholds and work reporting requirements, that unfortunately prevent people experiencing multiple forms of discrimination from accessing SNAP.

Increase benefits:

- Increase the allotment that SNAP participants receive to make it easier to afford a healthier diet – without the need to make tradeoffs for other basic needs.

Improve application processes:

- Modernize SNAP platforms, permanently adopt administrative flexibilities created during the pandemic, and modify applications or application requirements for individuals who have trouble meeting current requirements.

Improve outreach efforts:

- Increase language and interpreting services, improve targeted messaging in SNAP campaigns, and work with organizations that can help identify individuals who are potentially food insecure, like financial aid offices on college campuses.

Advance racial and gender justice:

- Give Tribes and communities who experience high rates of food insecurity more autonomy in the policymaking process, remove residency waiting periods, and ensure SNAP benefit administrators participate in anti-bias training.

Improve data collection:

- Allow people to self-identify as having a disability and add sexual orientation and gender identity as voluntary demographic questions.

Protect and promote SNAP choice:

- Ensure SNAP recipients retain the autonomy to purchase foods based on the health and nutritional needs of an individual or household, culturally preferred food, and foods that are locally available.